



Scottish further education
funding council

HMIe
improving Scottish education

**STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN
SCOTTISH FURTHER EDUCATION
COLLEGES
IN
ACADEMIC YEARS 2004-5 to 2007-8**

NATIONAL BRIEFING DOCUMENT: August 2004

1. Introduction to the revised review model

This two-phase proportionate review model is linked to the revised quality framework for Scottish FE colleges that was published on the SFEFC and HMIE websites on 28 May 2004. The previous version of the framework had enjoyed a high level of ownership in most colleges and was used extensively to carry out self-evaluations which have led to significant quality improvement in the sector. Therefore, while there are changes in emphasis within quality elements A5 (*Learning and teaching process*) and A7 (*Learner progress and outcomes*) and specific revisions to other quality elements, the fundamental structure and content of the quality framework is not significantly altered. This should ensure sufficient continuity with the previous version to avoid disrupting college self-evaluations. The four-point scale (*very good, good, fair and unsatisfactory*) will be retained. The major aims and objectives of the revised model relate primarily to building the capacity of FE colleges to sustain and enhance quality, and ensuring public accountability.

2. Aims and objectives of the proportionate review model

The model is intended to:

- support, promote and develop quality enhancement and good practice in colleges to provide the best possible experience for the learner;
- support college arrangements for enhancing quality by providing speedy and detailed information for college managers and staff on the quality of the programmes and services they provide;
- provide information to Scottish Ministers and the public on the quality of the colleges and their educational programmes;
- provide an independent evaluation to assist colleges in informing prospective and current learners of the quality of the college's educational programmes and services; and
- inform the Council's promotion of quality enhancement, funding allocations and policy development and provide assurances of value for money for public funders.

In realising the above aims, it will provide a breadth and depth of review that is differentiated in relation to the level of confidence that SFEFC and HMIE have in a college's arrangements for leadership and quality management in significant aspects that impact on the quality of the learners' experience.

3. Key concepts underpinning the model

Four key concepts underpin the model. Three of these concepts define the primary focus of differentiated review. This focus will be on:

- *Learning and teaching process* (A5; previously *Teaching and learning process*).
- *Learner progress and outcomes* (A7; previously *Student achievement*)
- *Leadership and quality management* (all of the B quality elements)

The fourth concept is that the follow-through phase of the review will be differentiated. The extent of reviewer engagement will be proportionate to the provisional strengths and points for development identified during the first phase.

3.1 *Leadership and quality management*

The B quality elements will comprise:

- *Educational leadership, direction and management*
- *Access and inclusion*
- *Guidance and support*
- *Resources and services to support the learner*
- *Staff*
- *Quality assurance*
- *Quality improvement.*

These quality elements reflect the capacity of the college to support the quality of the student experience and improve outcomes as evaluated in findings under the A elements (which are primarily about curriculum resources, processes and outcomes). A further quality element in the outgoing framework: *Arrangements for students with learning difficulties and disabilities* is no longer a separate entity, and its constituent quality indicators have been absorbed by the other B elements listed above.

3.2 *Learner progress and outcomes*

SFEFC and HMIE share the sector's views that the consideration of outcomes such as personal and learning skills and employability, and recognition of "distance travelled" in learning are essential for a comprehensive evaluation of learner progress and achievement. Consequently, quality element A7: *Learner progress and outcomes* focuses more than in the past on aspects of learner progress and achievement additional to attainment in award-bearing programmes. These aspects will be evaluated against quality indicator A7.1: *Learner progress and achievement*.

Learner retention and attainment data, and appropriate information on student progression will provide evidence for the evaluation of quality indicator A7.2: *Learner attainment*.

3.3 *Learning and teaching process*

The central and most important process in colleges is learning and all that facilitates it including:

- the relevance of programmes
- the quality of teaching
- the quality of learning materials
- the adequacy of staff, materials, equipment and the physical environment
- the impact of assessment

- the effectiveness of guidance and support (which with learning materials often takes the place of face-to-face teaching for students learning flexibly, such as those undertaking distance or online learning).

Consequently, in A5: *Learning and teaching process*, the model focuses more on the learning process than previously.

3.4 *Differentiated follow-through phase*

Reviews will be differentiated so that in each college they are proportionate to the strengths and points for development in *Learning and teaching process* and *Learner progress and outcomes*, and the level of confidence that SFEFC and HMIE have in the college's *Leadership and quality management* arrangements. Following review phase one and full discussion with the college, HMIE will confirm an agenda for the follow-through phase. The follow-through phase may be at any point on a continuum from 'light touch' to 'comprehensive'.

4. **Differentiated review – the two phases**

In the steady state, HMIE will not visit colleges as part of the review process proper until November in each academic year. This will ensure that reviewers can receive more informed feedback from learners who will normally have experienced at least eight weeks of their programme before being interviewed by reviewers. Transitional arrangements will be made for 2004-5, with reviews beginning in January 2005.

4.1 *Pre-review (September-October)*

For colleges being reviewed in that academic year, HMIE will:

- brief the college principal, chair of Board of Management, managers, and student association and learner representatives
- analyse college documentation, including strategic and operational plans, targets, PIs and three-year trends.

These procedures will help to determine the focus of the first phase of the review. The managing inspector (MI) will liaise with the college during this period and the college will be invited to provide fully current information prior to the first phase of the review. The subject areas to be reviewed will be determined by HMIE in discussion with the college to ensure that a representative sample of relevant publicly-funded activity is evaluated.

4.2 *Review Phase One (November to March)*

This phase of the review aims to:

- evaluate *Learning and teaching process* and *Learner progress and outcomes*;
- evaluate the appropriateness of the curriculum portfolio and the effectiveness of *Leadership and quality management* in terms of educational provision, targets, professional competence, self-evaluation, and addressing points for development; and

- inform the scope of the follow-through review phase, which HMIE will confirm following full discussion with the college.

4.3 ***Follow-through review (about six to eight working weeks later - January to May)***

The follow-through review phase will assist the college in preparing an agenda for action to improve the quality of the learner experience. It will:

- be designed to be proportionate to the strengths and points for development identified during the phase one review
- investigate and write up selected good practice associated with some of the key strengths identified during the phase one review, and other innovative or sector-leading examples of good practice
- investigate the causes and extent of any significant weaknesses identified in *Learning and teaching process*, and *Learner progress and outcomes* during the phase one review, drilling down using selected (and occasionally all) A quality elements
- investigate the impact and causes of any significant weaknesses identified in the *Leadership and quality management* elements.

5. **Review Phase One**

The scope of this phase will be the same for all colleges. **A single team** of HMIs and associate assessors (AAs) will be deployed in two groups (a college review group and a subject review group) during the Review Phase One week. A single **lay member** will be deployed across the two review groups.

5.1 ***Composition and scope of the college review group***

The group will usually comprise external reviewers, typically three HMI (one with the role of Managing Inspector) and three AAs. It will address each quality indicator in the element *Leadership and quality management* (the B elements) and quality indicator A7.2 in the element *Learner progress and outcomes*.

5.2 ***Composition and scope of the subject review group***

The group will usually comprise one HMI with the role of Assistant Managing Inspector (AMI), and five to eleven reviewers (most of whom will be AAs). It will address each quality indicator in the element in *Learning and teaching process* and quality indicator A7.1 in the element *Learner progress and outcomes* in up to eight subject areas depending on the size of the college and its pattern of provision. The group will also cover key specialist areas of provision - core skills, flexible learning and special programmes.

Reviewers will undertake a minimum of six observations of learning in each subject and specialist area. Reviewers will not allocate individual grades for these episodes of learning but will provide lecturers and other facilitators of learning with individual feedback on strengths and points for development. Reviewers' findings will

contribute to the overall grades awarded for A5: *Learning and teaching process* in each subject area.

5.3 *Information required prior to Review Phase One*

The following documentation will be requested directly from the college, to be provided no later than four weeks prior to the commencement of review phase one.

- Principal's context statement
- List of major and strategic external contacts (eg. employers, key partners, community groups)
- Strategic and operational plans for teaching departments and learner support sections/functions
- Any recent reports on the college by other external quality bodies
- College PIs for learner outcomes (including trends analyses)
- Recent self-evaluations and review reports
- Organisational charts, timetables and programme information (for example, prospectuses)
- College-nominated examples of good practice.

HMIE will also obtain documentation from other sources.

- Completed questionnaires from employers and community groups (as bases for subsequent telephone interviews)
- PI data from SFEFC, based on the college's FES returns.

HMIE will also supply an indicative list of further documentation to be made available during the review. The college will adapt this list as necessary and provide documentation to demonstrate the quality of provision and effectiveness of *Leadership and quality management*.

5.4 *Obtaining learners' perceptions*

The revised review model will use new methodologies to obtain improved feedback from learners on progress and achievement of outcomes such as the development of personal, learning, core and vocational skills, and the acquisition of skills for employability and citizenship.

5.5 *The college-nominated review co-ordinator*

The college should identify a senior manager with a comprehensive strategic overview to fulfil the role of review co-ordinator. This senior manager will play a key role in supporting the smooth operation of the review. Before the review HMIE will discuss and agree with each college the proposed nature and levels of reviewer engagement with managers and staff. HMIE will encourage college senior managers to work in partnership with reviewers to identify appropriate evidence. The role of review co-ordinator is to:

- act as the primary contact and liaison between the HMIE review team and the college
- clarify managers', staff and team roles and responsibilities
- direct reviewers to sources of evidence across the college, including the appropriate staff to interview on specific issues.

The college review co-ordinator will not:

- be expected to convey messages from other managers or staff to members of the review team
- have access to evidence gathered from review team interviews with college managers and staff
- be party to review team discussions or deliberations, other than on the scheduling and structure of review activity
- have any role in determining grades or communicating review team evaluations to other managers or staff.

5.6 *Review Phase One: Deployment of the college review group*

The following is **indicative** rather than prescriptive. It is intended that reviewers' interviews with managers and staff will be targeted at confirming potential strengths and points for development provisionally identified through reading college documents and discussions with college senior managers.

From Monday morning to Tuesday lunch time, the group will evaluate documentary evidence against all *Leadership and quality management* elements and quality indicator A7.2: *Learner attainment in award-bearing programmes* and identify potential key strengths and points for development. On Monday afternoon, the group will be briefed by the principal and senior management team including the review co-ordinator. They will also be briefed by the MI.

During the period from Tuesday afternoon to Thursday morning, the group will conduct interviews and undertake other activity requiring to determine the extent of concordance between documentary evidence and practice, and evaluate provision to identify provisional strengths and points for development. On Thursday afternoon the group will work with the subject review group to prepare key findings. On Friday the group will give oral feedback to the college, with grades for each quality element relating to *Leadership and quality management*.

5.7 *Review Phase One: Deployment of the subject review group*

From Monday lunch time to Tuesday lunch time the group will evaluate documentary evidence relating to quality element A5: *Learning and teaching process* and quality indicator A7.2: *Learner attainment in award-bearing programmes* and identify provisional key strengths and points for development. (In considering A7.2, the group will build on the work done by the college review group). On Monday afternoon, the group will be briefed jointly with the college review group by the principal, the senior management team including the review co-ordinator, and the MI. They will also be briefed by the AMI on Tuesday morning.

From Tuesday afternoon to Thursday morning the group will: evaluate all quality indicators in the element A5: *Learning and teaching process*; evaluate quality indicator A7.1: *Learner progress and achievement*; observe episodes of learning and teaching; and provide feedback to each lecturer or other learning facilitator on strengths and points for development. On Thursday afternoon the group will prepare key findings working with the college review group. On Friday the group will give oral feedback to the college with grades for quality elements A5: *Learning and teaching process* and A7: *Learner progress and outcomes*. The group's feedback on the latter quality element will be based on its own evidence gathered at first hand on A7.1: *Learner progress and achievement*, together with its views on A7.2: *Learner attainment in award-bearing programmes* arrived at in discussion with the college review group. Separate feedback will be given to operational managers and staff, and to the principal and senior managers.


The subject review group will also share with the college the extent to which it considers that any major strengths or significant weaknesses in A5: *Learning and teaching process* and A7: *Learner progress and outcomes* may relate to good practice or weaknesses in the other A elements: *Programme design, Accommodation for teaching and learning, Equipment and materials, Staff, Assessment, Guidance and learner support*, and *Quality assurance and improvement*. While these elements will not be evaluated directly during review phase one, reviewers evaluating against A5 and A7 will form provisional views on the:

- relevance of programmes to learners' needs
- adequacy of the physical learning environment
- adequacy of materials and equipment to support learning and teaching
- adequacy of staff to deliver and support learning and teaching
- impact of assessment arrangements on the learner
- adequacy of guidance and support
- impact of quality assurance and improvement arrangements on the quality of the learners' experience.

These provisional views will be expressed in terms of identified strengths and weaknesses. They will help to inform any subsequent 'drilling down' using all A elements and, where appropriate, the B elements, during the follow-through phase.

5.8 *Typical reviewer deployment in Phase One*

PHASE ONE REVIEW TEAM DEPLOYMENT		
	College review group 6 Reviewers (3 HMIs, 3 AAs) 1 HMI = MI	Subject review group 5-11 Reviewers (mainly AAs) + LM (working across both groups) + HMI = AMI
Monday		
(am)	Evaluate documentary evidence for B elements Evaluate A7.2	
(pm)	Briefings by principal/senior management team and MI Identify provisional key strengths and points for development	Briefings by principal/ senior management team and MI Evaluate documentary evidence
Tuesday		
(am)	Evaluate documentary evidence Identify key strengths and points for development	AMI briefing on A7.2 Evaluate documentary evidence
(pm)	Conduct interviews	Evaluate A5 and A7.1
Wednesday		
(am)	Conduct interviews	Evaluate A5 and A7.1
(pm)	Conduct interviews	Evaluate A5 and A7.1
Thursday		
(am)	Conduct interviews	Evaluate A5 and A7.1
(pm)	Prepare key findings with MI and subject review group	Prepare key findings with AMI and college review group
Friday		
(am)	Feedback to college managers on all B elements (9.30 – 12.00)	Feedback to subject managers on A5 and A7 (9.30 – 12.00)
(pm)	Feedback to senior managers (12.30 – 4.00) Preliminary indication of the scope and nature of the follow-through	Feedback to senior managers (12.30 – 4.00)



(6-8 weeks later)

Proportionate follow-through activities

5.9 *Statements of confidence*

Provisional statements of confidence

At the end of the phase one review HMIE will, in addition to awarding a grade for each B quality element and for A5 and A7, express **provisional** statements of confidence in the college. These statements may be applied to the college as a whole but in some circumstances HMIE may express different levels of confidence in the three aspects of *Learning and teaching process*; *Learner progress and outcomes*; and *Leadership and quality management*. Provisional confidence statements will be confidential to HMIE, SFEFC and the college principal. At the request of the principal HMIE will share provisional confidence statements with other college staff.

The format of confidence statements will be based on the following:

- HMIE is provisionally confident that College has effective learning and teaching processes and/or, learners are achieving appropriate outcomes, and/or the college is managing well and improving the quality of its services for learners [but (*summary of any concerns*).]

AND/OR

- HMIE is provisionally not confident that College has effective learning and teaching processes and/or learners are achieving appropriate outcomes and/or the college is managing well and improving the quality of its services for learners. HMIE is concerned that (*summary of major concerns*).

Confidence statements will be based on colleges meeting the following seven confidence criteria. Indicative elements for follow-through review most likely to be used are not bracketed but those in brackets may also be used.

Confidence criteria	Elements used in review phase one	Indicative elements for follow-through review
1. The learning and teaching process is good or very good in the subject and specialist areas evaluated.	A5	A8 (A5, A7)
2. Learner progress and outcomes are good or very good in all of the subject and specialist areas reviewed and learner retention and attainment is high across almost all subject areas.	A7	(A1 – A9)
3. Educational provision is well designed, planned and managed, and responsive to national, community, learner, employer, economy and stakeholder needs.	B1, B2, B3, B4	A1 (A2 – A9)
4. Demanding but realistic targets and key performance indicators (KPIs) are being set and largely achieved.	B1, B7.2	A9 (A1 – A8)
5. Levels of professional competence are high and being enhanced for all staff.	B5	A4
6. Programmes, resources and all services for learners are evaluated systematically, points for development are addressed and improvements made; and the quality of learning and teaching is evaluated and improved.	B6, B7	A9
7. Any major points for development have already been identified and acted on by the college.	B1-B7	A1-A9

(Criteria 6 and 7 include the validation of the effectiveness of the college's self-evaluation processes)

Final statements of confidence

The provisional confidence statement after phase one review will be finalised following the follow-through review, as follows:

- HMIE is confident that College has effective learning and teaching processes, and/or learners are achieving appropriate outcomes, and/or the college is managing well and improving the quality of its services for learners [but (*summary of concerns*).]

OR

- HMIE is not confident that College has effective learning and teaching processes and/or learners are achieving appropriate outcomes and/or the college is managing well and improving the quality of its services for learners. HMIE is concerned that (*summary of major concerns*).

6. Review Phase Two: follow-through (differentiated)

Differentiated follow through scenarios

Differentiated reviews will be on a continuum from a very light touch through many gradations to a review similar in depth and breadth to the current model. The total number of reviewer days spent in a college implementing the proportionate review model will be determined accordingly. In those colleges where provisional statements of confidence following review phase one are most positive, follow-through will focus primarily on good practice. Provisional grades of *fair* or *unsatisfactory* awarded during review phase one will be investigated more fully as necessary at follow-through review.

The following example scenarios are intended to be **indicative** rather than prescriptive.

6.1 *follow-through phase scenario where HMIE has provisionally expressed confidence but has identified concerns.*

The purpose of the follow-through phase is to probe further the major strengths and concerns identified in A5: *Learning and teaching process* and/or A7: *Learner progress and outcomes* and/or *Leadership and quality management* with a focused evaluation. Reviewers will seek examples of good practice that can be written up for wider dissemination, and will also use selected A Elements to drill down to identify the causes and, where appropriate, the extent of strengths and weaknesses. Activities may include more observations of learning and teaching within the same subject areas as those covered in the core review.

The size, composition and deployment of the review group will be determined by the agenda confirmed by HMIE following full discussion with the college at the end of Review Phase One. HMIE will take account of weaknesses identified during phase-one review, the size of the college, the diversity of its curriculum and the range of learning modes. In most cases, between two and eight reviewers will be involved for periods of two to three days each.

6.2 *Follow Through Phase scenario where HMIE has not been able to express provisional confidence after Review Phase One, and has identified major concerns*

The purpose in this instance will be to follow through comprehensively the strengths and major concerns identified in A5: *Learning and teaching process*, A7: *Learner progress and outcomes*, and *Leadership and quality management*, using all the A elements and B elements (as appropriate) to drill down, and applying at least A5 and A7 to additional subject areas to identify the causes and extent of strengths and weaknesses.

The size, composition and deployment of the review group cannot be predetermined. The scale of activity may require a group similar in size to the Review Phase One team, with individual reviewers being deployed for up to five days each.

7. Appeals, concerns and complaints

Colleges that believe reviewers have not received all available relevant evidence before arriving at an evaluation grade or confidence statement should submit any additional evidence in writing to the MI within five working days of the oral feedback by the review team. The MI, consulting members of the team as necessary, will consider any additional evidence and reply in writing, with a decision on any changes to be made..

College managers who have a concern or complaint about the conduct or the outcomes of a review should raise it in the first instance with the MI.

If matters are not resolved to the satisfaction of the college, it should be raised with HM Assistant Chief Inspector responsible for the FE review programme who will seek to resolve the issue.

If the appeal, concern or complaint is not satisfactorily resolved at this stage the college should pursue it through HMIE's published complaints procedure. Colleges will receive printed copies of the procedure in advance of the review, and it is also available at www.hmie.gov.uk.

8. Reports

All reports will be in the public domain but will be prepared for different audiences:

For college managers and staff

- a *practitioner report* mainly in bullet point format, comprising evaluative text with main points for action (MPfA) and examples of good practice will be issued to the principal and subsequently made available on the HMIE website. The combined report on both phases, which will be written in technical language, may be between 7,000 and 19,000 words.

For Scottish Ministers, SFEFC, FE College Boards of Management, the college's learners and the general public

- a *stakeholder report* of up to 3,000 words in plain English will be published answering key questions based on the *Confidence criteria*.

For prospective learners in the college

- A report will be written by the college in plain English, moderated as necessary and approved by HMIE and published by the college. This report will be based on generic guidance to be provided by HMIE following consultation with colleges, SPARQS and the NUS.

Timelines for the issue and publication of all the above reports will vary depending on HMIE findings at the review phase one stage and on the nature and extent of the follow-through phase.

9. Follow-up reviews

On completion of phase one and the follow-through review phase, it will be for SFEFC to determine whether, when and how HMIE should conduct further follow-up review. SFEFC will wish college HMI to monitor college progress in main points for action and points for development in all colleges. It is expected that any college receiving a statement of “no confidence” from HMIE will be required to submit an action plan to the Council, and HMIE will be asked to conduct a follow-up review within timescales to be determined by the Council in discussion with HMIE.

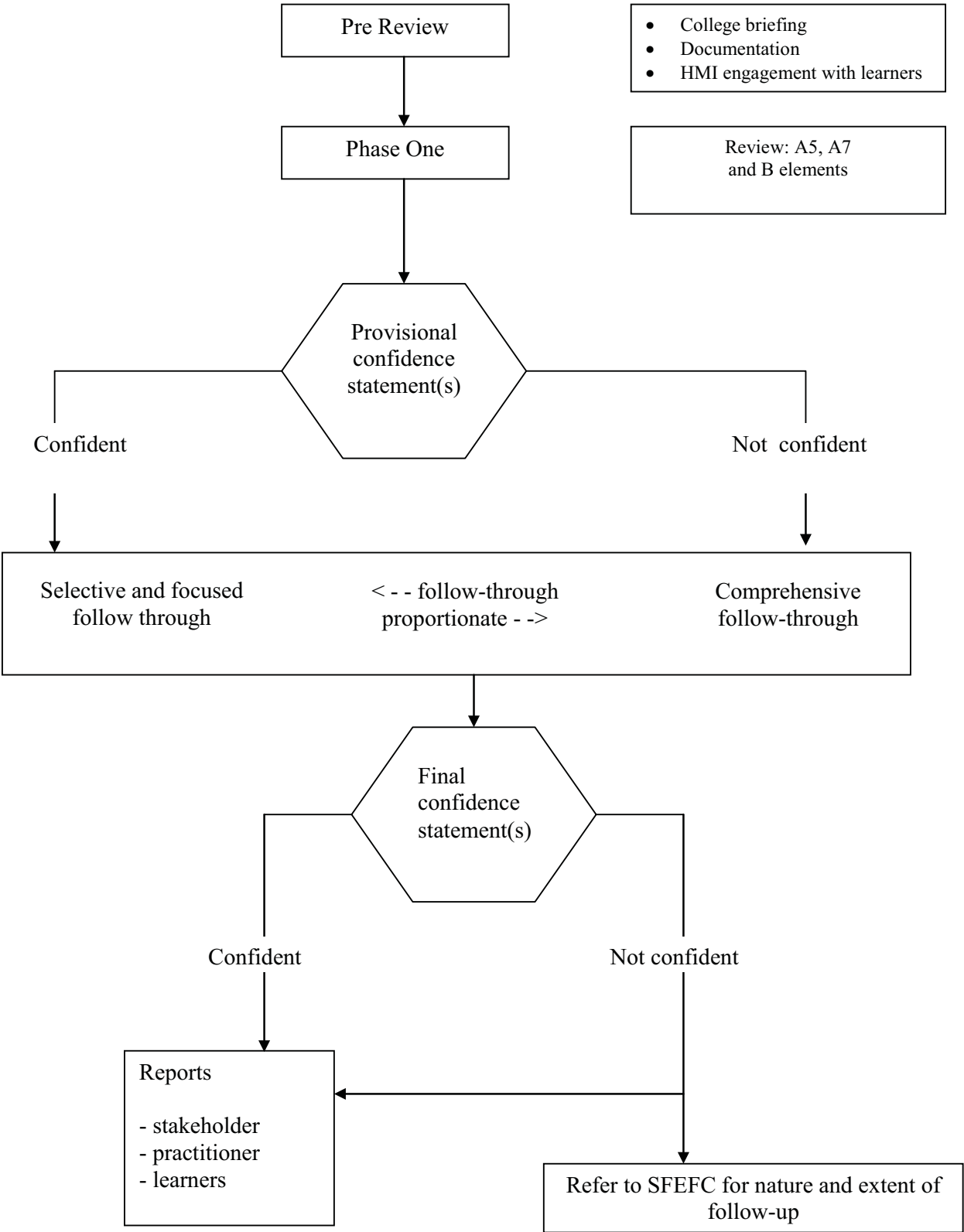
10. Encouraging the adoption of better practice across the FE sector

Good practice will be:

- provisionally identified by the college prior to review
- provisionally identified by reviewers during Review Phase One
- confirmed and further identified during follow-through reviews with the key managers and staff responsible
- written up jointly by college managers, staff and reviewers.
- Disseminated and promoted by HMIE and partner bodies.

Appendix 1

The proportionate review process



Appendix 2

Acronyms and abbreviations

AA	Associate Assessor
AMI	Assistant Managing Inspector
FE	Further Education
FES	Further Education Statistics
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector
HMIE	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MI	Managing Inspector
MPfA	Main Points for Action
NUS	National Union of Students
PI	Performance Indicator
PLP	Personal Learning Plan
QE	Quality Element
QI	Quality Indicator
SFEFC	Scottish Further Education Funding Council
SPARQS	Student Participation in Quality Scotland